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TO: Bob Watt, Denny Heck, and Terry Bergeson
Washington Learns Advisory Committee Chairs

FROM: Chris Gregoire, Governor 

SUBJECT: JULY 18 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Thank you for your excellent presentation of the "big ideas" from your respective advisory committees. I commend both you and the members of your committees for your significant progress. I trust the Steering Committee discussion has provided each of you with valuable feedback to share with your groups on July 18. In addition, I would like to share with you some of my concerns and ask that they be addressed at your next meeting.

As you know, I have recently conducted town hall meetings in Spokane, Tri-Cities, and Vancouver. What I have heard loud and clear is that education is a very high priority with the citizens of the state. Yet as strongly as they support education, they are skeptical that their current tax dollars are being spent as wisely as possible. Citizens are concerned that their tax dollars are not reaching the classrooms and students, but are lost in administrative costs. I hear frequent concerns about K-12 – and not just about the WASL. Of course, they are very concerned about students dropping out of school. I hear repeated concerns about the difficulty of transfer between institutions and across higher education sectors. They are worried about college costs and access for their sons and daughters. They are concerned about unequal funding across school districts, and the availability of technology. The list goes on.

These concerns are raised consistently in my travels around the state. In contrast, there is the view expressed, particularly by those involved with the education system, that money will solve all of our problems. While I believe it will be necessary to invest more than we currently do to educate our citizens, money alone will not create a world-class, learner focused education system. Deeper questions need to be answered as well: how effectively are current resources being spent? Are we addressing the most important priorities for the people of the state? Are we being efficient and effective? You heard some of this from one of our steering committee members.

A corollary question to current resource allocation and priorities is how we will hold ourselves accountable to deliver the results we all seek. The Steering Committee discussed a proposal for a P-20 Council that would undertake "EMAP" – Education Management, Accountability and Performance, modeled after the process now in place for general government. I am enclosing a video that further explains the GMAP process and an attachment that offers concrete examples of how an EMAP process might work.



To put it bluntly: I am excited by the bold vision Washington Learns is beginning to shape. But I do not think we can get the buy-in necessary to implement that vision unless we listen to our citizens and address their concerns. And so, with the above thoughts in mind, I ask that your advisory committees address the following questions on July 18:

1. Assume that the state will reprogram a significant amount of its current expenditures to education strategies of higher priority. What would you stop doing and what is the highest priority for use of those dollars?
2. What are the key elements of an effective accountability system that can track results from your area and across the whole of our education enterprise?
3. How would you apply the GMAP concept to education?
4. What two or three outcomes would resonate with our citizens as success?
5. For the higher education advisory committee, your consultant has recommended a "public higher education agenda." What specifically would you include in that agenda?

Again, I thank you for your leadership and commitment to our common task. I know we have plenty of hard work ahead of us but when I think of the progress we have made in the last year, I am truly optimistic.